(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) The action plan prepared by JCI procure jute during the above period ?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) and (b) Pursuant to the decision of the Central Govt. to fix the minimum support price for TD-5 grade of raw jute grown in Assam at Rs. 570/- qtl. for the 1997-98 jute session i.e. July/June, the corresponding minimum support prices for all grades of jute for various up-country markets in different jute growing States have been fixed by the Jute Commissioner in the light of normal market price differentials.

(c) The Government have released requisite funds of JCI to the undertake price support operations. JCI have prepared action plan to enter the market to arrest the falling prices of raw jute effectively.

Appointment of Disabled on the Board of Directors

1577. SHRI N. DENNIS : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state the details of the steps taken to get disabled persons nominated to the Board of Directors of Nationalised banks and private sector banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : Nomination of directors on the Boards of nationalised banks and other scheduled commercial banks are made in accordnace with the provisions of the relevant statutes governing such nominations. These statutes do not specifically provide for appointment of disabled persons on these Boards.

[Translation]

Directions to Commercial Banks to provide more Loan to Agricultural Sector

1578. DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA :

SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY :

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH :

SHRIMATI KETAKI DEVI SINGH :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have directed the Commercial banks to provide more loans to the farmers for encouraging the modernisation of Agricultural sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the number of farmers benefited/likely to be benefited as a result of the said directions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) As per extant instructions issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), all scheduled commercial banks are required to provide 18% of their net bank credit to the agriculture sector. As of March 1997, on a provisional basis, the total advances to the agriculture sector from all public sector commercial banks aggregated Rs. 31,012 crores (16.35% of Net Bank Credit against stipulated 18%), which shows an increase of about 17.7% over the level of Rs. 26,351 crores for the year 1995-96. Further, under the Special Agriculture Credit Plans (SACPs) RBI has advised scheduled banks to keep up a growth rate of 25% over the disbursals made in the previous year and has fixed target for SACP for the current year at 16,097 crores as against estimated achievement of Rs. 10,172 crores during the year 1995-96. Further, National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) has also advised the co-operatives and Regional Rural Banks for attaining required growth in the flow of ground level agricultural credit.

Some of the important steps taken to strengthen the institutional arrangement for augmenting flow of credit to agriculture include, inter-alia, augmentation of NABARD's share capital to Rs. 2000 crore over the next five years, setting up of Rural Insfrastructural projects, allocation of an amount of Rs. 270 crore during the current year for restructuring of RRBs, establishment of State Level Agriculture Development Finance Companies (SLADFCs) to promote investments in commercial and high-tech farming and establishment of local area banks.

(c) At this stage, it will be difficult to estimate precisely the number of farmers benefited likely to be benefited as a result of the proposed measures.

[English]

Study on Soft Drink by BICP

1579. SHRI PRATAP SINGH SAINI : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have commissioned a Bureau of Industrial Cost and Prices Study on the soft drink industry during the last two years;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith terms of reference;

(c) whether a report has been submitted by the BICP;

(d) if so, the details thereof alongwith its findings;

(e) the names of each bottler from whom information was sought by BICP; and

(f) the details of information sought and the information provided by these bottlers ?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (f) Does not arise.

Lok Adalat in Rural Areas

1580. DR. A.K. PATEL : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :